Up Close:

Audrey Lavi & Cherryll Lieberman

Audrey Lavi and Cherryll Lieberman are both dedicated members of the El Paso Jewish community, devoting their time to good works and proving just how powerful Jewish women are through their work with Hadassah. Neither Audrey nor Cherryll were born to El Paso’s Jewish community, Audrey was born in Brooklyn but moved to El Paso with her parents when she was six months old, so she considers herself mostly a native. Cherryll took a more circuitous route, she was born in Detroit, brought up in Highland Park, IL and lived in Boston, Miami, and L.A. before coming here.

Audrey’s parents immigrated to the United States from Hungary. They were Holocaust survivors who felt it was important that she was raised as, in her words, “a good Jewish girl”. She grew up attending Camp Young Judaea, which instilled a love of Israel in her from an early age. She attended the Young Judaea Gap Year course after she graduated high school, before starting college, but she wasn’t done with Israel yet.

After finishing her degree in Education at The University of Texas, Austin, she returned to El Paso for six months, during which time she met her husband, Eitan. After six months Audrey made Aliyah and she and Eitan, who is Israeli by birth, were married in Israel. Audrey and Eitan lived in Israel for five years, and their first child, Moti, was born there. After their return to the U.S., Audrey and Eitan had two more children, a daughter named Yamit and a son named Danny.

Audrey’s heart was always with young children, in Israel she taught English, and upon her return to the U.S. she became an educator in El Paso.

Audrey knew about Hadassah from her time at Camp young Judaea, which led to her lifelong love for Israel, so when she was asked to be on the board she automatically agreed.

Cherryll grew up in Highland Park, and from there went to college in Boston and then to the University of Miami where she received her degree in History. After that she moved to Los Angeles, where she met her first husband, David Small, with whom she had two children, Andrew, and Brian.

Cherryll spent nearly twenty years in the entertainment industry, but after having children, she wanted to do something “more important” with her life. This led her to the healthcare field, where she did everything from data entry to admissions coordinator for an acquired brain injury clinic.

It was Cherryll’s second husband, Lester Lieberman, a native of El Paso, that brought Cherryll home to this community. After visiting with Lester’s sister and his childhood friends, they decided to move here permanently.

Cherryll was raised in the Reform movement and found a home at Temple Mt. Sinai, though she also attends Congregation B’na’i Zion with her husband. Coming from the Reform community, Cherryll was more familiar with ORT than Hadassah, but when a friend who served on Hadassah asked for help, she couldn’t refuse. She has been active with Hadassah for ten years.

What do you value most in your friends?

Audrey: In friendship I value someone you can trust. Knowing they are there for me no matter what.

Cherryll: Their trust and compassion as well as their “joie de vivant” (joy of life) they share.

Who’s your favorite (female?) Jewish hero (living or not! fictional or not) and why?

Audrey: My mother Agnes Klein Schaechner is my Jewish Hero. She was born in Hungary and was a survivor of the Holocaust. Her strength to continue after she was orphaned and displaced was true heroism. She arrived in El Paso when she was just a teenager. She never let the horrors of the Holocaust stop her from raising 3 girls who grew up to be strong women. She became a master in her field as a social worker at the Department of Children Services.

Cherryll: Golda Meir. I grew up watching my mom cook & prepare for Passover, then sharing the Seder with family, grandparents, aunt, uncle, and their family. And of course, searching for the afikoman with my brother and cousins.

What is your Hadassah story?

Audrey: I attended Young Judaea Camp throughout my youth. I continued even as I grew older. I became a counselor as a teenager and attended the Young Judaea year course in Israel after I finished high school. Hadassah is a supporter of Young Judaea and I believe that connection brought me to Hadassah later in life. Upon my return from Israel in 1989 I became a life member of Hadassah and an active member promoting Hadassah projects.

Cherryll: I came to Hadassah later in life, now being a life member for just 10 years. It was because I was asked to help a Hadassah member. She was in charge of programming but had health issues. I had visited Israel in 2008 which strengthened my Jewish identity, so I was happy to assist, then Hadassah became a passion. I’ve made my stepdaughter Hannah, my daughter-in-law Noel and my granddaughter Elynn life members.

What’s your favorite Passover memory?

Audrey: Matzah ball soup was my favorite food during the seder no matter what age.

Cherryll: When growing up, watching my mom cook & prepare for Passover, then sharing the Seder with the family, grandparents, aunt, uncle, and their family. And of course, searching for the afikoman with my brother and cousins.

What value do we need most in our world today?

Audrey: Acceptance of other’s differences no matter what. The recent anti-Semitism, racism, and homophobia have torn our world apart.

Cherryll: There isn’t just one. Tolerance, patience, honesty, understanding and, of course, love.

With so many needs locally and nationally, what is the importance of the connection with a hospital in Israel?

Audrey: We, as Hadassah women, have the power to heal the world. Thanks to the medical system in Israel, we helped create new treatments, and scientific breakthroughs are saving lives around the world everyday as volunteers, as philanthropists, and as changemakers.

Cherryll: It’s not just a hospital, it’s an extraordinary example of humanity: from its treating all patients no matter their race, religion, political or financial status; their incredible research in medical advancements which profits all mankind; to participating in emergency medical rescue missions in other countries, i.e. Haiti’s 2010 earthquake.

Leaders are called upon to lead the Jewish people out of slavery in the Passover story. You are both leaders who impact Jewish life in our city. What message would you like to share to encourage others to take on leadership positions in our community?

Audrey: You have to believe in yourself even though you might be criticized. Your dreams can be achieved. Remember you are not alone, and your team will be there for you to achieve your goals.

Cherryll: “From generation to generation…” As part of the older generation, I’d like to see younger members step up and bring their exciting, new, fresh ideas to the table so that our Jewish values and life can continue to grow and prosper in El Paso.
Here for Good

I’d like to start by talking about Good.

In a year filled with new fears, old threats, and so much divisiveness, it’s a refreshing topic, and one that is easy to forget about. But at the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso, Good is something we think about every day. Because Good is something that we do every day.

Good is in our DNA, as a community, and as an organization. Good is what we have been doing for more than eight decades. It’s what we are focused on now, during one of the hardest years we have ever faced. And Good is what we will do in the future.

Because the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso, together with your support, is Here For Good... here at home, in Israel and throughout the world.

We impact every sphere of Jewish communal life locally. And this year, as COVID-19 changed our world, we didn’t just continue our work. We evolved, finding even more ways to provide support. That included being a lifeline to our isolated seniors, with meals, programming and engagement, transportation and wellness support, providing peace of mind to them as well as their families, who could not be with them.

We have helped those with special needs, families in distress and people struggling with mental health issues or other overwhelming life challenges - all of which only increased last year - we have created new support groups and established the emergency fund together with The Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso. We distributed masks to community members and local agencies, helped with the food insecure with partnerships in our larger El Paso community, and we are always preparing for the next need.

But Good isn’t just about working in crisis mode. It’s about being proactive to strengthen Jewish life and lay the foundation for the next generation. Which is why we’re dedicated to supporting Jewish formal and informal educational opportunities.

Our funding provides scholarships to parents who wish to send their children to Jewish nursery and day school - and hopefully this year, overnight camp.

As we all know, a true Jewish community with all its rich traditions and vibrancy is multi-generational and diverse. That’s why we organize gatherings that enable people of all ages and backgrounds to connect, participate and experience the joy of Jewish community. Not even COVID-19 could stand in our way of sharing Good. We not only found ways to offer most of our important programming virtually, but created new opportunities, some of which have been so popular, they’ll live on in a post-COVID world.

It’s reaffirming to know that despite the challenges, our traditions and legacies are stronger than anything that can keep us apart. We have lived through this, and even thrived, thanks to the resources and programs we already had in place, and the innovative nature of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso, our community, and its commitment to sharing Good.

We are Here For Good.

But Good doesn’t just happen on its own. It comes from supporters in our community, who are dedicated to the promise of a flourishing Jewish future. As Abraham Lincoln said, “The best way to predict your future is to create it.”

With your gifts to our Community Campaign, you will help families struggling in our community get back on their feet, ensure the vulnerable continue to be cared for, and that younger generations are given the opportunities to connect to our heritage and Jewish communal life through us and through our partners.

Your support means that the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso will continue to help Good grow. Just as we have in the past. Just as we will in the future. Because with your help, we’re not going anywhere.
The Seer of Lublin (Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Horowitz) who lived from 1745-1815 CE is rumored to have said:

“In my judgment, it is better to be a wicked person who knows he is wicked, than a righteous one who knows that he is righteous. Worst of all is to be a wicked person who thinks he is righteous.”

The ‘wicked’ child (rasha) asks during the Passover Seder: “What does this service mean to you?” Tradition teaches that by saying “to you” they remove themselves from the sacred story, failing to see it as if they themselves were Israelite slaves who experienced redemption.

The celebration of Passover is all about taking the time to acknowledge that we experienced redemption before. We know, collectively, what it feels like to go from degradation to liberation. It is in our bones and in our kishkes. Simultaneously as we re-experience the past, we anticipate future redemption. Having happened before it can happen again! Unless you are the wicked child. In which case the story is remote, impersonal. An act of mere intellectualism surrounded by food and drink.

Nathaniel Deutsch writes that there is a difference between liberation and freedom. Liberation is what happens for our ancestors, when they took “a leap of faith and exchange the yoke of slavery in Egypt for what the rabbis call ‘the yoke of heaven.’ [...] The wicked son [...] denies he is a member of the Jewish community. [...] By asserting his individual freedom, the Haggadah declares, the wicked son has exempted himself from the liberation from Egypt” (New American Haggadah, 30). Hence, the Haggadah states: If the wicked child had been in Egypt, they would not have been redeemed.

As Passover approaches, the symbolism of the four children reminds us of our connection to thousands of years of tradition and history. The wicked child raises questions about commitment and identity which are at the heart of the festival itself. It is not one’s wickedness which inspires them to exempt themselves from the destiny of the group. Instead, that desire for exemption is what makes that child wicked. As the Seer of Lublin articulated: it is that kind of self-righteousness which is truly wicked!

May our festival season inspire us to retell the story as if we ourselves were there, so that we might understand and celebrate a sense of ongoing liberation and redemption.
On Wednesday, March 8 we will observe International Women’s Day. It is a day for celebrating the achievements for women past and present. Passover also begins in March this year, it begins the evening of Saturday, March 27. When we talk about the heroes of the Passover story, we typically speak of Moses, but the Passover story also contains many women whose own roles were instrumental in helping to free the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. Miriam is one such woman.

Miriam was the daughter of Amram and Jochebed, and Moses’ older sister. Unlike many women in scripture, she is not known only for who she married, or who her sons were, she is also a prophet in her own right. She is the first woman in the Bible to receive that title. And, if one wanted to, one might argue that the story of Moses, and the freeing of the Jews from slavery, would not have been possible without her.

Miriam is credited as being the unnamed sister who, after Jochebed placed the infant Moses in the Nile to save him from the Pharaoh’s decree that all newborn Israelite boys be killed, stayed behind to see what befell her brother. After the daughter of the Pharaoh found him, it was Miriam who approached her and asked if she could bring a Hebrew wetnurse, and brought her mother, Jochebed.

We read nothing of Miriam after that, until the Israelites cross the Red Sea, and Pharaoh’s army is destroyed. The Midrash tells us that just as Moses led the Israelite Men from Egypt, and taught them Torah, it was Miriam who led the women, and saw to their education as well.

"For I brought you up out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam". (Mica 6:6)

Here Miriam is listed alongside her brothers, as an equal, as one of the leaders of the Jewish people. And like her brothers, she received a gift to help her people as they wandered through the desert for 40 years.

"Three great leaders led Israel: Moses, Aaron and Miriam. In their merit they received three great gifts: the Well [Miriam], the Clouds of Glory [Aaron] and the Manna [Moses].” (Ta’anit 9a)

Miriam’s well follow her, and provided water for the Israelites, drying up upon her death at Kadesh.

This International Women’s Day and Passover raise a glass, of water or wine, to Miriam, the first prophetess and deliverer.

I Can’t Take It With Me!

The Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso in the past, and especially now during these troubled times of the pandemic, has done an outstanding job of trying to keep the community involved. They have been and are providing services for all segments of our community. I myself have had their interest and direct help during illness with the Shalom Shuttle – complimentary ride service - taking me to medical appointments and offering help with all manner of emotional and medical necessary needs.

While I give small donations to show appreciation for all that they have done, I realized that growing older and the clock ticking it became necessary to review my wishes for the distribution of assets if there are any after I am no longer here.

I found an avenue to address these thoughts without altering my will and still being able to leave something to the Federation for their future programs by leaving a gift through the Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso.

I signed a letter of intent, which will guide my estate how to handle my wishes. It is better than a verbal discussion so the mission can be carried out without doubt since I could no longer be involved in the discussion.

Borderland’s Café Europa has been especially helpful during the lock down as well as the staff calling to see if there is anything more they can do to help. Since I cannot take it with me, I would like to have the opportunity to have shared what I had.

For more information contact Robert French, Jewish Community Foundation of El Paso Executive Director, 915-842-9554.
Leaving Egypt means Remembering Egypt

Pesach has always been my favorite holiday. It was one of the few Jewish things that I was familiar with when I was growing up in Ecuador. Of course, I loved that we got to eat a big, special meal (charoset especially!) with friends we didn’t see too often. But I also loved that the Pesach seder is such an experiential experience. I love that every year we relive that transition from slavery to liberation. I love that the haggadah forces us to question what it means to be free and what it means to live today in relation to a collective memory that reminds us every day that we were slaves in the land of Egypt. My favorite part of the Haggadah is the injunction:

עופר כללו את זה מתמר
בכל רור צפורות דים וברוח מתן

In every generation a person is obligated to see themselves as if they had personally gone out of Egypt. For all of us, seder night reminds us of our own journeys through Mitzrayim, the narrow places, that restrict and limit us from being our fully-realized selves. For all of us, seder night calls us to remember that once we were strangers, and that that should never be the shape of the world again.

This year, the idea of Mitzrayim feels more relevant than ever. We have been in this narrow place for a whole year now, confined to our homes and separated from loved ones. We have discovered newfound appreciation for the freedoms - now lost - that we once took for granted. And we have learned something about responsibility, for we have learnt just how much we are connected to others, how much we depend on one another. It’s hard to fathom that we will once again be marking Passover with a Zoom seder. We are more prepared than we were last year, and this year our Zoom seders come with freedom in sight. Vaccinations have already been administered and soon the worst of this pandemic will be over. But let us not forget what it was like to live in Mitzrayim. Let us use our memory of Egypt for good, to build a world that is safe, free, more compassionate and filled with hugs once more.

I wish you all a Chag Pesach Sameach. L’shanah Haba’ah Beyachad - Next year together!
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Israel is a flourishing, innovative nation — and so too are its people who continue to seek new and varied ways to express their Judaism.

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[www.jewishelpaso.org](http://www.jewishelpaso.org)

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**Higher Meanings:**

Connecting Religion and Mathematics

*Temple Mount Sinai*

**Divinity & Infinity**

with Dr. Larry Lesser

Thursday, March 18 at 6:30pm Mountain

**Does God Live in Another Dimension?**

*(How What We Assume Shapes What We Conclude)*

with Dr. Kim Regnier Jorgentos

Sunday, April 25 at 6:30pm Mountain

**Mathematics, Computing, Ethics, and Religion: from Naïve “Contradictions” to Deep Agreement**

with Dr. Olga Kosheleva and Dr. Vladik Kreinovich

August (date and time TBA)

**Gersonides and the Limits of Knowledge**

with Dr. Smezana Lawrence

October (date and time TBA)

**Dr. David Novick in conversation with Rabbi Ben Zeidman**

December (date and time TBA)

For information and (free) Zoom registration:

[https://www.templemountsinai.com/Learning/SIS](https://www.templemountsinai.com/Learning/SIS)

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**#HEREFORGOOD**

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CBZ Book Zoom Presents

Meredith Jacobs
Just Between Us: Mother and Son

Meredith Jacobs is CEO of JWJ, a nonprofit with the mission of empowering women leaders and ending violence against women and girls. Jacobs is an award-winning journalist and former editor-in-chief of Washington Jewish Week.

Want to know how to raise a mensch? Meredith Jacobs is back, with a new edition to the bestselling journal series Just Between Us—for moms and their sons. This thoughtful keepsake journal is the perfect place for a mother and son to share stories and dreams, hopes and fears. Advice, guidelines, and prompts by author Meredith Jacobs and her son pave the way to discussing everything exciting and scary about growing up—from friendships and school to positive masculinity. With plenty of free space to write about whatever’s on their minds and fun pages for drawing pictures and making lists, this journal will open the lines of communication and help strengthen mother-son relationships.

DATE: Sunday, March 7, 2021
TIME: 7:00 PM
ZOOM ID: 95992826356
PASSWORD: 885

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Temple Mount Sinai Spearheads Effort to Help With Overdue Electric Bills

A powerful partnership between El Paso Electric (EPE), the faith community of El Paso, and the El Paso Community Foundation (EPCF) wants to brighten the hearts of the utility's customers who have been hit hardest by the pandemic through a newly developed fund.

The Bright Hearts of El Paso Fund will help El Paso County residents who are behind on their electric bill payments. The fund will cover a portion of the down payment needed to set up a repayment plan. El Paso Electric will match every dollar donated to the fund. The goal is to raise $1 million.

Currently, the electric company has more than 40,000 customers who are behind on their bills. Of those, 9,000 are behind by three months or more and could be at risk of service disconnection. The Bright Hearts of El Paso fund will help those most in need stay connected — and on a path to manage their electric bill.

“We know that the measure of our resilience is in the strength of our partnerships, which is why, when we were approached by Temple Mount Sinai to find a way to come together and help, we jumped at the opportunity,” said Eddie Gutierrez, EPE Vice President of Customer and Community Engagement.

“Temple Mount Sinai brought the idea forward as a way to help those who are struggling in our community because of the pandemic,” Rabbi Ben Zeidman said. “When El Paso faces adversity, we come together to tackle it head-on. ‘El Paso Strong’ is more than just a slogan, it is who we are. It is a culture of supporting one another that makes El Paso so remarkable. We all hope that the Bright Hearts of El Paso Fund will provide some assistance to households who are struggling under the compounded weight of unpaid bills, joblessness, and illness.”

“Helping those in need and facing hardship is an essential part of living out our faith, particularly in this border culture marked by solidarity,” said Bishop Mark Seitz.

“This is the kind of work that we all need to gather around and do for people who are in dire need,” said Eric Pearson, President of the El Paso Community Foundation.

For questions about Bright Hearts of El Paso, call the El Paso Community Foundation at (915) 533-4020. Donations may be made at epcf.org/brighthearts.

Learning Through Stories

Passover has always been my favorite holiday because I love to retell a story. There is a saying that although the story doesn't change year to year, what we do and how we understand and interpret the lessons can shape us differently every year. This is certainly the case with Passover. We all get together at a beautifully set table, filled with friends and family, and retell the story of how the Jewish people finally got their freedom from slavery in Egypt - this is called the Seder.

As a child, the food in front of us may seem odd but we’re challenged to try new things so we can understand, through experience, a part of the Jewish people's history. At The J Center for Early Learning our whole school would usually get together to have a Seder (with our parents too) but this year, we’ll celebrate just with our classmates. We’ll make a Seder plate, to take home. We will also try strange foods that have special meaning, and we’ll learn songs that help to tell our story. I look forward to exploring this holiday with the children and I hope, by the end, they find it as joyful as their teacher does. Chag Pesach!

Mindy Escobar-Leanse
Judaic Teacher at The J Center for Early Learning

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The Center for Early Learning
www.thejelpaso.org
Bea Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund

Applications are now being accepted for the Bea Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund. Applications must be received on or before May 17, 2021 for distribution by August 6, 2021.

In July 2001 the Beatrice L. Weisz Memorial Scholarship Fund was established so that proceeds from the fund would be given to a needy and worthy Jewish college student(s) in El Paso to enable him or her to pursue his or her studies.

Applications are available at www.jewishelpaso.org
Pesach and the “Community vs Individual” Conundrum

Life is a balance between fending for ourselves and contributing to society. On the surface these two ideas are contradictions, but Pesach teaches us how these two extremes can complement and enhance each other.

One of the recurring themes of the Seder is the fact that the centerpiece of the Seder is missing. In preparation for redemption G-d commanded the Israelites in Egypt to purchase a sheep, tie it to their bedpost for four days, slaughter it on the 14th of Nissan and roast and eat it on the eve of the 15th of Nissan in their homes together with Matzah and Maror. The next morning the long-anticipated exodus happened, and the Jewish nation was born. For generations to come the miracle of Pesach would be commemorated by families and groups offering a Pesach sacrifice in the Holy Temple on the day before Pesach which was then roasted and eaten on the first night of Pesach together with Matzah and Maror. Unlike the first Pesach in Egypt, the Pesach sacrifice can only be done in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, hence this centerpiece has been missing from our Seder for close to 2,000 years. Nevertheless, we continue to learn about it and discover important life lessons for here and now.

There were two categories of sacrifices offered in the Holy Temple: Communal and personal. Communal sacrifices were purchased with private funds but was offered in the Holy Temple in large groups and every Jew was obligated to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way. The Pesach sacrifice is unique in that it had both private and communal characteristics. It was purchased with private funds but was offered in the Holy Temple in large groups and every Jew was obligated to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way.

The message is clear. Every individual is capable of and expected to sacrifice their personal interests for the benefit of the community, and the community is obligated to put everything on the line for the benefit of every individual. Sound like a contradiction? Perhaps. But the name of the sacrifice is “Pesach” which means to “leap over.” Upon confronting obstacles, one needs to jump, and there is no greater obstacle than our personal interests that separate us from each other and from the community at large. We have the power to rise above it all by tapping into our essence, rooted in divine truth, causing all other issues to become irrelevant and disappear as we unite as one.

Let’s focus on tuning into our “Pinteleh Yid” - our Jewish essence - by adding in Torah learning and Mitzvah observance - just because, thereby allowing us to unite with world Jewry and prepare the universe for the final and complete redemption through Moshiach.

Best wishes for a Kosher and Joyous Pesach!

In Loving Memory: Conversation and Support for the Bereaved Bereavement Support Group Led by Sharon Ash Tancredi

Loss is a lonely and isolating experience. In this online ZOOM group, you have the opportunity to share the loss of your loved one with others from our community. Coping with a loss is particularly difficult during a pandemic when some of us are secluded. We will come together weekly, comfort each other, share our stories, discover how each of us cope with the impossible, and inspire each other.

Tuesday, March 9 • 6:00 pm

Sharon Ash Tancredi earned a Master’s Degree in Social Work from Boston University and has been in private practice for more than twenty-five years.

www.jewishelpaso.org

#Here for Support

Katja Mayfield has been offering her services to the Greater El Paso Jewish community for the past six months and has encountered a variety of issues when addressing concerns: During the times of COVID these have primarily consisted of concerns of isolation (especially by the elderly), lack of access or being able to access resources, heightened anxiety or exacerbation of already existing conditions such as mild depression. For the most part, these issues could be addressed over the phone/computer via referral to additional COVID related resources (housing assistance, senior programs, debt relief), with general education and anxiety management strategies, or in some cases some longer counseling for specific mental health issues. A couple of individuals could also be helped by linking them to medication management providers in the community.

She has also had a couple of opportunities to meet actual members through the Federation’s Borderland’s Café Europa program and present her services as well as educate on how things are being addressed under the current COVID circumstances and respond to some questions as well.

Overall, it appears that with COVID infections on the decline and the vaccines moving in, we have seen some relief and reduction in anxiety in the communities as of late. Katja hopes that this trend will continue and want to thank the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso for giving her the opportunity to be of help to them and their members.

Katja Mayfield, LCSW, MFT
In a few days the Jewish people will sit down to their respective Seder tables around the world. The Lubavitcher Rebbe would usually announce at the beginning of the Seder that in Kabbalah it is written that one should say the Haggadah at the Pesach Seder in a RAISED & JOYOUS voice.

JOY is thus an indispensable ingredient for the Seder service.

I ask myself, how can one think about the thousands and tens of thousands of fellow Jews who are sitting alone on the night Pesach, and not feel a heartbreak?

The answer to how can we be joyous? Is the same answer as to Mah Nishtana, ‘four questions’ of the Haggadah. The answer is: ‘Avadim Hayinu’ we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.

In every generation we have to view ourselves as leaving Egypt. If G-d were not to have liberated us from Egypt we would still be enslaved.

Slavery is not just being locked up in chains and prison. Enslavement is also a state of being. When a person doesn’t connect to his spirit which is unfettered and free. Freedom is more than just not being locked up. Freedom of spirit is the ability to choose to remain positive and inspired even when outside circumstances are gloomy and even dire.

G-d took us out of Egypt and gave us the capacity to always remain free. Notwithstanding what the circumstances may be, we have the ability to rise above them, albeit sometimes its excruciatingly difficult.

Victor Frankl the founder of Logotherapy, brought out this point very poignantly based on his observations during the Holocaust. We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.

Every one of us has to do their utmost to REJOICE and have an UPLIFTING SEDER.

For those with their families and no guests, try to rekindle the speciality of your relationship.

For those all alone. You will have to work hardest at your Seder to be joyous!!!

You are the true heroes.

When G-d gives a challenge, he gives the G-dly power to rise to the occasion.

All of us who are celebrating, with others or alone, join the collective Jewish effort this Passover to usher joy, holiness, liberation and HEALTHY FREEDOM into the world by EATING MATZAH and REJOICING with gratitude to G-d for our LIBERATION from Egypt 3333 Years ago.

With blessings for a meaningful, inspiring, uplifting and JOYFUL Seder.

And a Kosher and Happy Passover, in GOOD HEALTH!!!

Rabbi Bery Schmukler, Chabad Las Cruces
There is an interesting discussion in the Talmud (B. Pesachim 108b/109a) about engaging children in the Passover Seder. How do we keep our children interested?

First proposal: Children should be given four cups of wine. They are obligated to drink the four cups just like all women and men. Good idea?

Rabbi Yehuda immediately dismisses this method when he asks: “What benefit do children receive from wine?” I think he knew that wine would put them to sleep.

He suggests giving them roasted grains and nuts on Passover eve to keep them up so that they can ask the four questions. Rabbi Akiva liked that idea as well. Both Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Akiva believed that these foods would stimulate the children and help keep them awake.

Rabbi Eliezer took a slightly different tact. He said you should grab your matzah and eat it very quickly and that will keep the children’s interest. At some level, I wish we had a YouTube that showed Rabbi Eliezer modeling his recommendation. I wonder if he tried to whistle a tune after quickly consuming the matzah.

Every time I read this section of Talmud, I am reminded of both the importance of engaging our children in our faith and practice (and this includes the inner child within each of us) and doing so in a creative and thoughtful manner.

Each year we are given the opportunity to change up our Seder a bit to keep the story alive and filled with meaning for all who join around our table, especially the children. The basic story: our journey from slavery to freedom remains constant. And for all of us, our yearning for freedom is yet both a historical reminiscence as much as a current-day reality. And this we should convey to our children. While the nature of our servitude changes, the goal of freedom remains constant. What is your contemporary “Egypt?” For many this year, it is Covid-19.

What is your contemporary “Egypt?” For many this year, it is Covid-19. What would our children think if we placed a model or a picture of the Covid-19 virus on our Seder tables? Would that help keep their interest in the story? Or perhaps an Emirate flag? And, through active discussion, tied the meaning of this contemporary object to the history of our people read from the Hagaddah.

What will you do this year? Chag Sameach!

Rabbi Scott Rosenberg
Congregation B’nai Zion

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These We Honor With Tributes
Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso

TO: The Family of Bob Bendalin in his Memory
FROM: Hank and Joy Rothschild
FROM: Regan Coleman
FROM: Brenda and Herb Ehrlich
FROM: Jean Scherotter
FROM: Jeanette and Michael Pincus
FROM: Amy, Clement and Mitchell Marcus
FROM: Linda and Andy Burger
FROM: Diego and Rachel Castrillon
FROM: Mima Jackson

TO: Wendy Rothschild in Memory of Her Beloved Husband Lester
FROM: Richard and Eileen Armour

In Loving memory of our daughter, Sheri Armour Cohen, Zachor L’Olam
From: Richard and Eileen Armour
We will all have at least one Seder guest this year

It's important to appreciate that a visit by Elijah the Prophet is no simple matter. For two millennia scholars and saints eagerly awaited an encounter with the prophet turned angel, and here we merit his presence at every Seder. The only other event Elijah attends without fail is a Bris; the joyous celebration when a newborn boy is circumcised and inducted to the covenant of Abraham. What’s the deal with these two events that warrants such a high-profile guest?

Elijah lived during a religiously challenging period of Jewish history. As the only remaining legitimate prophet of G-d in his time, he was a fugitive with a price on his head, and he claimed that Judaism was lost. To prove him wrong, G-d made Elijah a permanent guest at every Bris and Seder.

The common denominator between them is that these are the most observed Jewish rituals in Judaism. For generations Jews of all stripes and levels of observance preserved the mitzvah of Bris under all circumstances, often to the point of literal self-sacrifice. And a very high percentage of Jews have a Seder of sorts on Pesach.

Perhaps the reason for this phenomenon is because these are the rituals that express the core of Jewish continuity: the family unit. By default, the Bris is observed in a family setting since the eight-day old child can’t arrange one for himself. His father and mother make all the arrangements and they are the ones who need to overcome their natural inclination to protect their child from all pain to allow for the Bris to happen. Without the family, a Bris cannot happen to the eight-day old boy.

And the Seder has been the default family reunion for ages. What Thanksgiving dinner is to the American family, the Seder is for the Jewish family.

Judaism will never end because our families keep it together. And this year as we welcome Elijah once again into our Seder we hope and pray that he will bring with him the long-awaited tidings of the imminent redemption through Moshia'h when peace and tranquility will reign for all.

Best wishes for a Kosher and Joyous Pesach.

Look Who Came to Dinner!

Our *Pacesetters community was treated to a very special program via a virtual Look Who’s Coming to Dinner program with Chef Aarón Sánchez.

Chef Sánchez was in his home kitchen in New Orleans, demonstrating how to make his special Margaritas, Guacamole (avocados from Michoacan, Mexico are the best), Chips and Carne Asada Tacos while providing tips and stories along the way. In advance participants received copies of the recipes, a jar of the Chef’s special spices along with a copy of the Chef’s new book “Where I Come From” and other special treats.

Chef Aarón, an award-winning chef, TV personality and philanthropist is also a native El Pasaño.

Robin Furman and Wendy Lanski, Co-chairs of our Community Campaign and Martha and Cliff Eisenberg and Tania and Scott Schwartz invite one and all to show your support of the many programs and agencies supported by your donations to the Community Campaign.

To make your donations online go to www.jewishelpaso.org or contact Sue Bendalin at sbendalin@jfedelpaso.org to donate or make your pledge. We are looking to close our community campaign by June 30, 2021.

*Pacesetters donate $1,800 per person annually to our community campaign.
2021 Community Campaign - Thank You for Your Support

As of February 24, 2021

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Seder Meal (same as above): Gefilte fish, horseradish, two salads, chopped liver, matzah ball soup, choice of brisket or Pesach “crumbs” chicken, potato kugel, vegetables side, dessert. $35 per person

Full Seder Kit - matzah, Haggadah and complete seder plate, wine and Shemurah Matzah. $20 per kit - one kit recommended per Seder.

Order by Thursday, March 18 at www.jewishelpaso.org/passover
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Prepared under the supervision of Chabad Las Cruces